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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 004985

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/FO, SA/A, S/CT, EUR/RPM  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
CENTCOM FOR POLAND, CG CFC-A. CG CJTF-76

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [OVI](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL MURPHY/SKELTON MEETS KARZAI

Summary

1. (SBU) Congressmen Murphy, Skelton, and Marshall, accompanied by Ambassador Neumann, met with President Karzai on November 24 to discuss U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. Karzai expected the inauguration of the newly elected Parliament to occur December 18 or 19 since announced for the 19th. He felt that ISAF has done a good job, but noted that NATO had not yet been tested. He added that the replacement of American troops by NATO forces in some areas, did, in fact, engender a sense of unease. Karzai and the Congressmen discussed the overall security situation: disbandment of armed groups and reconciliation; counter-narcotics performance; U.S. assistance, including Afghanistans desire for additional military equipment; and the Strategic Partnership. End Summary.

National Assembly Inauguration

2. (SBU) President Karzai told the Congressmen that he expected the inauguration of the newly elected national Assembly to take place on December 18 or 19. He said he was feeling very good about the make-up of the National Assembly, and was working hard to make preparations. Saying that the MPs were broadly representative of all political groups in Afghanistan, he added, with pride in the Afghan people, that the turnout during the elections was highest in the regions where the insurgency was worst. He noted he was meeting daily with MPs-elect, including the woman who had received the largest number of votes in Herat. The 249 MPs were busy trying to elect a speaker. Karzai claimed he was resisting appeals for support from various candidates, and would not interfere. The Afghan President commented cheerfully that the elections had ushered in a new era, with Cabinet Ministers becoming more alert and on top of their briefs, because they could see the National Assembly coming up behind them.

Security Conditions Around Afghanistan

3. (SBU) In response to a question about what Afghan regions needed enhanced security, Karzai responded immediately that the areas bordering Pakistan needed heightened protection. There had been periods of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan, he said, adding that what Pakistan was now doing on border security was all right, but Afghanistan would like to see Pakistan doing more.

Karzai also pointed out that much hate material against Afghanistan originated in madrassas in Pakistan, which made the man in the street in Afghanistan angry. The Afghan leader said that ISAF had done well, but NATO had not yet been tested. He acknowledged that there was lingering concern among some people when U.S. troops, who had shouldered the burden of bringing security to the most troubled areas, were replaced by troops from other nations. Karzai opined that the Bonn Agreement had been implemented in an exemplary manner, but that the possibility still remained that Afghanistan could fall back into trouble, and that there would be danger for years to come. The Congressmen stressed they were a bipartisan delegation (one Republican and two Democrats), and that the U.S. was in Afghanistan for the long haul, and was not going to abandon Afghanistan.

Reconciliation Process

4. (SBU) Karzai told the Congressmen that there had been a great reduction in the number of weapons around Afghanistan. Virtually all of the large weapons had been collected through the DIAG process, though it was harder to collect the small weapons. He added that Professor Mojadedis reconciliation process was working very well. Over 600 former Taliban and others had come back to Afghanistan from Pakistan, including 250 more senior former

officials and commanders. Karzai said that most had been reabsorbed into their villages and communities, noting that some who had committed particularly heinous acts were hated by the people and would not come back.

#### Counter-Narcotics

15. (SBU) Karzai emphasized in standard language his governments commitment to counter-narcotics work, repeating familiar statistics about last years 21 percent reduction in the area under cultivation, a decrease of 27,000 hectares. Citing a bomb set off near the site of a recent anti-poppy rally, Karzai said it was a tough war war that the GOA has to win. The Afghan leader and the Congressmen discussed the nexus between insurgents/terrorist and narco-traffickers, which Karzai said had a long history in modern Afghanistan, particularly under the Taliban. Karzai noted that alternative livelihoods were essential, and described Afghanistans potential as one of the worlds best fruit producers. He cited the success of Afghans in re-planting orchards around the country over the last year, and exporting pomegranates to Japan a healthy, high value fruit.

#### Positive Relations with the U.S. Beyond Doubt

16. (SBU) President Karzai thanked the U.S. for its presence and contributions to Afghan stability, saying that Afghanistan would always be a strong partner for the U.S. in the war on terror. Before his last trip to the U.S. to announce the Strategic Partnership between the U.S. and Afghanistan, he had met with a group of some 1200 shura ura (traditional tribal council) leaders to discuss the Strategic Partnership. Only two had offered mildly critical comments overall the group had been overwhelmingly.

#### Assistance Programs

17. (SBU) The Afghan President expressed satisfaction with the monetary levels of assistance from the U.S. and the international community. He noted that there were some losses through contractors and sub-contractors. Karzai praised U.S. road construction, education, and health programs. The backbone roads system was essential to enable the farmer to market his crops and grow the economy, vital for counter-narcotics progress, bringing government and governance throughout the provinces, as well as for enabling security and transportation for the military. President Karzai noted that the power sector had problems, even though electricity availability was better than three years ago. Congressman Murphy asked Karzai if Afghan hospitals could use supplies from American hospitals in his district, which had surpluses that they would like to donate. Karzai replied that the Ministry of Health would be happy to accept such donations.

18. (SBU) With respect to strengthening ANA forces in Afghanistan, Karzai expressed satisfaction with their training, but urges the USG to consider supplying additional equipment, including airlift capability. He said he did not want the ANA to go back to old Soviet equipment, and that he was not allowing the GOZ to engage with the Russians (who, he implied were ready to be helpful). Karzai acknowledged that increasing equipment, and that he was not allowing the GOA to engage with the Russians (who, he implied were ready to be helpful). Karzai acknowledged that increasing equipment would be a financial/budget challenge for the GOA, which already relies heavily on assistance to pay the ANAs costs. He noted, however, that when a U.S. helicopter had been shot down in a mountainous area, it had taken the ANA 17 days to get to the site because the ANA had no airlift capability.

#### Thanksgiving

19. (SBU) President Karzai was gracious and made frequent reference to his fondness for the U.S., and Afghanistans reliability as a partner in the war on terror. He spoke warmly about his experiences visiting his brother in Maryland, and his pleasure driving himself (without and entourage and security) and enjoying coffee at Starbucks, as well as his enjoyment of country music in Nashville. He said that all of his brothers had now returned to Afghanistan. Karzai recounted how much he had enjoyed partaking of turkey and celebrating Thanksgiving (his meeting the Congressmen which took place on Thanksgiving Day). The Congressmen and President Karzai closed the meeting with some banter about exporting pomegranates to

the U.S. and making them part of the traditional  
Thanksgiving feast.

110. (U) This cable had been cleared by Codel Murphy.  
NEUMANN